

Declaration on the occasion of the 30th anniversary of the Blue Planet Prize

Imagine a society organized around the three pillars of sustainability for a nature-positive future that leaves no one behind. The natural world would be preserved and reintegrated into our lives, agricultural landscapes, and cities. Social justice and equality would be core values in political decisions to avoid the extreme forms of social inequality that are prevalent today. Diverse economic opportunities would be offered to all so everyone could strive to fulfil their aspirations and potential, and live a dignified life. Such a society would embrace core values of empathy, justice, sustainability, and knowledge.

Realizing this vision is a journey that requires maintaining a focus on our values and goals. By cultivating optimism and deploying immense creativity we will find solutions that are consonant with a society's culture, thus achieving short-term successes, and ensuring persistence. The point of departure of this journey is the realization that our current trajectory is unstable and unsustainable and endangers future generations. Future uncertainties preclude us being able to define the exact, best path forward. We can, however, more readily identify futures we do not want, and hence avoid undesirable pathways leading to such futures from which it may not be possible to return. Doing this will allow us to remain within a set of acceptable pathways, the particular 'best' one of which will depend on cultural values and the state and dynamics of the world at the time.

The solutions for a sustainability transition are largely known. They include switching to renewable energy and to healthier and environmentally beneficial diets, making buildings more efficient, greening our cities, preserving biodiversity in a greatly expanded network of protected areas, helping farmers in low-income countries sustainably increase productivity, electrifying vehicles, managing forests and agricultural lands to enhance biodiversity and the provision of ecosystem services, investing in a fairer world, and encouraging solutions based on cooperation rather than conflict. Many innovations exist but their implementation needs to be rapidly scaled up. In parallel, the existing, unsustainable systems need to be actively phased out. There will be many breakthroughs, setbacks and surprises along this journey, hence the need to build resilience in our systems.

Some of the required changes will be difficult and, as occurs in complex systems, may be more likely to be achieved after some small disturbance has initiated a "collapse" phase that is rapidly followed by reorganization. This short re-organisation phase is a time when crucial changes can be made. Understanding these dynamics and being prepared for the opportunities they provide is an important part of effecting transformational change.

Such a profound transformation of our societies and of our relationship with nature can only be achieved through partnerships between civil society organizations, public governments from the local to the international levels, and the private sector. These different individuals and organizations need to form coalitions and join forces to address specific challenges for which they develop common interests. These partnerships will require cultivating trust between these partners.

Civilizations are defined over the long term and need to have the welfare of future generations as a central goal. We need to listen more carefully to the voice of the young generation and pay attention to their messages. We need to encourage communication across generations and walks of life. We need to talk about the future and make it a subject of widespread debate that works its way up in society, to influence decisions by today's leaders. We cannot continue to make decisions that undermine the future of our own children or the quality of the environments in which they will live. Our future needs to be defined by the moral values we want to enshrine in our human existences.

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former laureates of the Blue Planet Prize